

## **Annual Congregational Meeting Community Unitarian Universalist Church**

2875 East Parker Rd, Plano, TX75074-7503

May 21, 2017

### **Welcoming Congregation Renewal Committee Report 2016-2017**

I. The Welcoming Congregation Renewal began Dec. 4, 2015, at a meeting where the purpose was to identify actions Community Unitarian Universalist Church to accomplish. One group was Increasing Congregational Diversity in which **Anita Vanouwerkerk, Ian Rule, John Crowley, and Vickie Verinder** raised Social Action topics of concern. Someone mentioned a lack of visibility of welcoming LGBTQ (Welcoming Congregation status).

Overhearing us, **Dick Hildenbrand**, remarked that previous action was about 20 years ago when **Deb Bliss** led the study of LGBTQ to get the first designation of Welcoming Congregation. Many social action acts followed with member involvement including the feeding and personal care of AIDS patients and memorial services for many.

May 2016 Annual Congregational Meeting the congregation approved a request to seek the renewal of the Welcoming Congregation designation.

- II. June 11, Anita and Vickie attended a small congregation conference at UU church in Arlington, TX which emphasized LGBTQ problems.
- III. June 21, 2016 -At a regular meeting the Board approved a formal charge to the Welcoming Congregation committee which in part is, "Actions to be taken shall include but not be limited to: surveying the membership; bringing in Sunday morning worship service guest speakers on LGBTQ issues as appropriate; offering workshops on LGBTQ topics for CUUC members and friends; and recording past achievements such as participation in public LGBTQ events and support of AIDS victims."
- IV. **Current Committee Members:** Anita Vanouwerkerk, Chair; Andra Garcia, Alyssa Church, John Crowley, Nelah McComsey, Stephanie Dorman, Kimberly Meadows, Vickie Verinder. Each member of the committee offered support in multiple and varying capacities while many people, some not officially on the committee helped greatly.
- V. **To Highlight a few members:** **Deb Bliss** shared the history of Welcoming Congregation, and attended the sessions; **Jodie Zoeller** developed a flyer describing Welcoming Congregation committee; **Nela McComsey** tailored a UUA survey to fit our needs, administered, and tallied the results; **Gene Verinder** kept us connected technically and supervised the Drop-Box; **Celeste Kennedy** and **Kimberly Schramm** publicized; **Kathy**

**Smith, Stephanie Dorman, and Vickie Verinder** located speakers, and spoke up at committee meetings about current trends. **Rev. Patrick Price, Vickie and Gene Verinder, Kimberly Meadows and Stephanie Dorman** were present at various local events including **Plano City Council, Allen and Dallas Pride parades**; **Stephanie Dorman** also led two well attended workshops, wrote letters to the TX. Legislature, and spent 2 days in Austin to support the non-conforming cities affected by Patrick's Potty Bill; **Betsy Friauf** also presented a program on Racial Diversity; **Nelah McComsey, Betsy Friauf, Karen Rogenkamp and John Crowley** purchased flags for the Church's use; John also researched various pertinent topics which he shared with the committee; **Dick Hildenbrand** hung the flag on the flagpole; **Linda Frank** searched the archives and located trophies and ribbons awarded to the church for MLK parade wins; **John Hart** led a workshop session on Religious Diversity; **Fifty-six members** responded anonymously to the survey in August and September. **Thanks to each of you** and others who supported the work of the WC committee.

### **Planning & Development**

- VI. Communication facilitated by Gene Verinder** via e-mail, Drop-Box, phone chats, and small meetings of two or three supported the work of the committee throughout the year. May 14, 2016-Anika Phillips, Anita Vanouwerkerk, Jodie Zoeller, John Crowley, Nelah McComsey, and Vickie Verinder met briefly after church.
- VII.** Jodie developed the flyer announcing the Welcoming Congregation Renewal Committee and distributed them on Sun. May 15,
- VIII. June 21, 2016** Members looked at the LGBTQ rainbow flag in the foyer and determined it needed to be more visible. Members chose topics of interest to research. All realized more was to be learned than any of us originally realized
- IX. July 2016 John Crowley** reviewed Community UU's documents and materials looking for welcoming/inclusive language. He made suggestions for changes. See website.
- X. Aug. 15 Kick-off: Nelah McComsey** electronically sent out a **survey titled WELCOMING CONGREGATION ASSESSMENT OF COMMITMENTS** and mailed copies to those who don't have e-mail.
- XI. Aug. 27, Sat. All Church Retreat, Theme—Welcoming Congregational Diversity**—topics were: **LGBTQ** speaker **Stephanie Dorman**; **Immigration** speaker and lawyer for immigrants **William O. Holston**; **Betsy Friauf** raised issues of **Racial Diversity**; **John Hart** reviewed the history of **Religious Diversity**, with emphasis on Islam.
- XII. Sept. 6, 2016** Speaker, **Jeff Vanouwerkerk** focused on the question, **"Why PRIDE?"** He showed the absence, until recently, of LGBTQ people in ads, movies, TV and books. Reviewed the extremely high suicide rate among LGBTQ persons and the **loneliness** felt when no one understands.

- XIII. **Oct. 4, 2016 “What Did You Say?”** Speaker **Inclusive Language Amelia Owlsley**. Asked all to learn more sensitive language; the request for use of pronouns to refer to LGBTQ; and other possibly hurtful references
  
- XIV. **Sat. Nov. 5, 2016, 10:00-12:00** Workshop Topic: **UU International LGBT Human Rights Work**, Speaker **Mary Overton**, past **Board member of UU-United Nations Office** in New York City. .
  
- XV. **Sunday Nov 6, 2016, 10:30-12:00**, Sunday Sermon Speaker **David Overton**, Topic, **LGBT Human Rights – An International Perspective**. David, Advisory Board Chair of the **UU-United Nations Office in New York**, also serves on the **Board of Mercy Ships**, global health non-profit. Both **David** and **Mary Overton** are active **with UU Service Committee**.
  
- XVI. Feb. 7, 2017 **Stephanie Dorman** facilitated a call to action, **On Gender Expression and Identity**. Guest speakers **Katie Sprinkle**, LGBT Law Attorney and **Ethan Avanzino**, Cathedral of Hope Transgender Council Member. Attendees were asked to use the supplies from the table, write thank you notes to legislators, and decorate them as valentines. Stephanie mailed them.
  
- XVII. May 13, Join the **GENDER REVOLUTION** with **Katie Couric** as she explores the complexities of gender identity. Produced by National Geographic TV. All are welcome in this safe space--straight, gay, cis, trans, male, female, bi.
  
- XVIII. May 21, 2017 Annual Congregational Meeting vote renewing Community Unitarian Universalist Church’s Welcoming Congregation designation.
  
- XIX. Look around the church and the church grounds. This year the Welcoming Congregation Committee led the journey into new territories of knowledge about human diversity. It’s obvious from the SAI BABA banner, church web site, rainbow flags on the flagpole out front and in the foyer; notices and flyers throughout the church-- **Community Unitarian Universalist Church is and has been a Welcoming Congregation since 1991**. But the work isn’t over. Additional challenges must be met in society and in the halls of justice.

Thank you,  
 Anita Vanouwerkerk, Chair  
 Welcoming Congregation Committee 2016-2017.